Ombudsman
B.C.'s Independent Voice For Fairness

News Release

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OMBUDSMAN 2006 ANNUAL REPORT PUTS EMPHASIS ON OUTREACH

VICTORIA - B.C. Ombudsman Kim Carter today released her Annual Report for 2006, which summarizes the Office of the Ombudsman's activities for that year.

"The 2006 Annual Report includes matters of interest to renters, home owners, workers, students, families, drivers, persons receiving support payments or those seeking medical treatment," said Carter. "With more than 2,800 public agencies falling under the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman we deal with people from all parts of the province on a daily basis."

In 2006, the Office of the Ombudsman received over 6,400 complaints and inquiries. The majority of complaints were about provincial ministries but the office also dealt with complaints about provincial commissions, such as the Workers' Compensation Board, Crown corporations such as BC Hydro, health authorities, municipalities, school boards, colleges, universities and professional associations such as the College of Dental Surgeons.

While the number of complaints and inquiries has increased by approximately 10 per cent in 2007 the Ombudsman is still concerned about how many British Columbian's are aware of the Ombudsman's office. "In March 2006 less than one third of the British Columbian's surveyed knew there was an independent office in the province that could investigate complaints about public agencies," said Carter. "Outreach and communication remain a priority, in particular in the lower mainland which generated only 43 per cent of the inquiries and complaints our office received in 2006. Quite simply we can't assist those people who do not know we exist and what we can do."

During 2006, the office also released three special reports including: *Special Report No. 27 – The Power of an Apology: Removing Legal Barriers.*

The Annual Report is available from the Office of the Ombudsman or at its website at www.ombudsman.bc.ca.

People who have concerns or complaints about administrative fairness can write to the Ombudsman's office, complete an online complaint form at www.ombudsman.bc.ca or telephone 1-800-567-3247.

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